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Message Text

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21
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

DHA-02 /070 W
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R 181310Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7229

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 1254

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CI
SUBJECT: INTERVIEW WITH CHILEAN AIR FORCE GENERAL LEIGH

REF: SANTIAGO 1039

1. SUMMARY: A VISITING CONGRESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER REPORTED TO EMBASSY LONG CONVERSATION WITH GENERAL LEIGH CONSISTENT WITH OTHER INFORMATION WE HAVE ON LATTER. LEIGH IS CONCERNED WITH CHILE'S POOR INTERNATIONAL IMAGE AND PRESSING FOR IMPORTANT DOMESTIC CHANGES, BUT WOULD NOT FORCE THE ISSUE TO A BREAK IN THE JUNTA. END SUMMARY.

2. WILLIAM SCHNEIDER, ON STAFF OF NEW YORK SENATOR BUCKLEY, VISITED EMBASSY FEB 12 TO GIVE US RUNDOWN ON TWO-HOUR TALK PREVIOUS DAY WITH AIR FORCE (FACH) CINC/JUNTA MEMBER GENERAL GUSTAVO LEIGH. SCHNEIDER SAID HE GAVE US HIS IMPRESSIONS IN CONFIDENCE BUT HAD NO OBJECTION TO EMBASSY REPORTING THEM ON CLASSIFIED BASIS.

3. SCHNEIDER HAD BEEN INVITED TO VISIT CHILE FOR A WEEK BY NEW YORK-BASED CHILEAN BUSINESSMAN WORKING FOR GOC IN PR FIELD. HE HAD ALSO CALLED ON, AMONG OTHERS, ECONOMY MINISTER SERGIO DE CASTRO, EDUCATION MINISTER ADMIRAL ARTURO TRONCOSO, AND INTERIOR UNDER SECRETARY COLONEL ENRIQUE MONTERO. HE WAS SCHEDULED TO CALL ON PRESIDENT PINOCHET FEB 13.
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4. SCHNEIDER FOUND LEIGH INTELLIGENT, FLEXIBLE, AND LIKEABLE. LEIGH WAS WELL AWARE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOUGH GOC INTERNAL SECURITY POLICIES AND GOC'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE, OF STATE OF PLAY OF LEGISLATION IN CONGRESS THAT RELATES TO CHILE, AND THE COSTS TO CHILE OF INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION. HE SAID CHILE MUST AVOID THE SPANISH EXAMPLE. SCHNEIDER RECEIVED IMPRESSION THAT LEIGH BELIEVED INTERNAL SECURITY THREAT WAS NOW LOW ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY SOME RELAXATION. IN THIS CONTEXT, LEIGH TOLD SCHNEIDER HE HAD RECOMMENDED THREE MAJOR STEPS TO JUNTA:

A) ABUSES OF HUMAN RIGHTS HAD OCCURRED; THEY WERE NOT SYSTEMATIC, RATHER FOLLOWED FROM KIND OF DIFFICULT SITUATION IN WHICH CHILE FOUND ITSELF. TO CORRECT SITUATION, PROBLEM OF DIRECTORATE OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE (DINA) MUST BE CONFRONTED. ONE WAY WOULD BE TO REMOVE DINA CHIEF COLONEL CONTRERAS, WHO IS NOT INCOMPETENT BUT WHO CONTRIBUTES IN MAJOR WAY TO GOC'S POOR IMAGE.

B) DROP STATE OF SIEGE, BUT ONLY WHEN GOC HAD AN ANTI-TERRORIST LAW LIKE THOSE OF FRG OR FRANCE THAT WOULD FILL THE LEGAL VACUUM IN WHICH CHILEAN POLICE WOULD OPERATE WITHOUT EMERGENCY LEGISLATION. (COMMENT: IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER LEIGH SUGGESTED DROPPING STATE OF SIEGE TWO LEVELS INTO ONE OF THREE REMAINING LOWER LEVELS OF EMERGENCY, OR DROPPING ALL OF GOC'S PRESENT EXTRAORDINARY AUTHORITY AND RETURNING TO NORMAL CIVIL LAW. IN FORMER CASE, WHICH SEEMS MORE LIKELY, GOC WOULD HAVE AMPLE AUTHORITY TO HANDLE PRESENT OR ANY LIKELY POLITICAL/INTERNAL SECURITY THREAT. IN LATTER CASE, EMBASSY WOULD FORESEE SOME PROBLEMS BUT BELIEVES THEY WOULD BE MANAGEABLE AND THAT GOC COULD HANDLE SITUATION BASICALLY UNDER EXISTING CIVIL LEGISLATION.)

C) ABOLISH CURFEW ON MARCH 1. SCHNEIDER COMMENTED THAT HE HAD HEARD TALK THIS WOULD BE DONE, AS HAS EMBASSY.

5. LEIGH SPOKE ON SUBJECT OF JUNTA UNITY. HE SAID THAT THERE WERE PERSONAL DIFFERENCES IN VIEWS BUT THAT MEMBERS WERE TOGETHER IN BASIC MATTERS. ONLY THE LOSS OF POPULAR SUPPORT WOULD SPLIT JUNTA MEMBERS. AND LEIGH BELIEVED THE JUNTA CONTINUED TO HAVE POPULAR SUPPORT: HE CITED THE GALLUP CONFIDENTIAL

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POLLS AND THE PUBLIC RECEPTION OF JUNTA MEMBERS.

6. SCHNEIDER SAID LEIGH WAS ACRID ON SUBJECT OF MULTI-NATIONAL CORPORATIONS. AS IT TURNED OUT, LEIGH INVEIGHED ONLY AGAINST LOCKHEED AND NORTHROP, PARTICULARLY LATTER'S ATTEMPT TO ADD OVER MILLION DOLLARS TO PRICE OF F-5 AIRCRAFT AS PAYMENT TO LOCAL AGENT OPERATING FROM SPANISH FIRM.

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7. COMMENT: DESCRIPTION OF LEIGH'S ATTITUDES IS CONSISTENT WITH WHAT WE KNOW OF LEIGH AND WITH RECENT EMBOFF CONVERSATION WITH FACH GENERAL CLOSE TO HIM (REFTEL). LEIGH IS LOYAL TO JUNTA AND FULLY SHARES ITS BASIC AIMS, BUT HE BELIEVES IMPORTANT MEASURES SHOULD BE TAKEN INTERNALLY TO RIGHT THE UNFAVORABLE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE. IT APPEARS TO EMBASSY THAT HE WOULD NOT FORCE THE ISSUE TO A BREAK.

8. EMBOFF COMMENTED TO SCHNEIDER, WHO CONFIRMED IMPRESSION, THAT GOC IN INVITING HIM PRESUMABLY THOUGHT IT HAD ANOTHER ADVOCATE WHO WOULD UNCRITCALLY ACCEPT AND PUBLICIZE WHAT HE FOUND. INSTEAD, IT INVITED AN ENLIGHTENED CONSERVATIVE WHOSE KNOWLEDGE OF US REACTION TO CHILE AND WHOSE SYMPATHETIC CRITICISMS OF GOC WERE RECEIVED MORE EASILY THAN THEY WOULD BE FROM AN ACKNOWLEDGED ENEMY OF GOC. HE OBVIOUSLY FOUND IN LEIGH A PERSON PSYCHOLOGICALLY PREPARED TO TALK ON THIS BASIS. POPPER

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